

An analysis of the reflective BBS diary in “School Volunteer” activities at local elementary and junior high schools

小幡 佳菜絵 (Kanae Obata)

Advisor : Norio Hozaki

1. Introduction

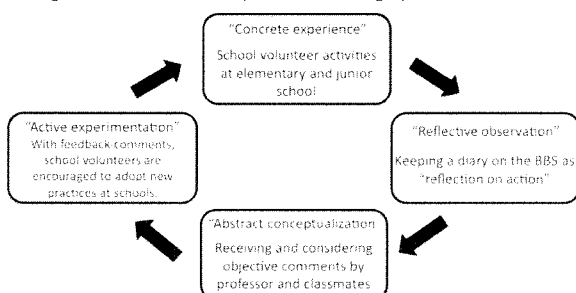
Under the new system of pre-service teacher education in Japan, more and more students are encouraged to work periodically at elementary schools and junior high schools as “school volunteers” before they start student teaching. Considering the recent approaches to the aspect of school volunteering, however, more qualitative and long-term research, especially in regard to the learning of pre-service teachers, is required. In order to construct and develop a model of the bilateral beneficial relationship between local schools and school volunteers from university, therefore, this study intends to discuss the learning of pre-service teachers through school volunteer activity considering both qualitative and long-term views.

2. Previous research

School volunteer activities include the following three phases of learning: The first one is experiential learning in practicing at schools. Secondly, participants are required to keep a diary in which they record their volunteer activity on a BBS, an online communication system of Waseda University, “CourseN@vi”, which is considered as “reflection on action”. The third one is comments by the professor and classmates about the participants’ diary, which are regarded as feedback. The phases of learning by school volunteers are adapted from Kolb’s model (1984).

Kolb (1984) proposed a model of “experience as the source of learning and development”, which mentions the following four phases in experiential learning: 1) concrete experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualization, and 4) active experimentation. Then, Fig.1 shows the model’s conformity with learning by school volunteers.

Fig.1 Kolb’s model and experiential learning by school volunteer



3. Analysis of the reflection in the BBS diary

3.1 Participants and methods of analysis

A total of 15 university students, pre-service teachers, participated in voluntary activities at an elementary and junior high school near the university in Tokorozawa city for the entire academic year of 2009. Each of the volunteers was required to keep a diary on the voluntary activities, including 1) dates, 2) subjects they assisted, 3) how they assisted, and 4) observation, opinions, and analysis every time they participated. Also, almost every time, the professor, as supervisor, responded to their reports.

A total of 156 contents in the BBS write-ins were analyzed by the qualitative method. All sentences in their reports were interpreted and divided into the following three categories, 1) observation, 2) activities, 3) findings and analysis.

3.2 Results and Discussions

3.2.1 Volunteer activities as Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)

Volunteer activities can be regarded as LPP with the following three viewpoints. The first is that volunteer activities are participation in a certain practicing community, or “school”. Secondly, volunteer activities involve transformation of participants’ identity in the community. Lastly, participants experience authentic practice in the community.

3.2.2 Considerations of the professor’s comments

The Professor’s comments could lead participants to reconsider the meaning of teacher’s behavior, offer other perspectives about teaching, and encourage them to notice the invisible and hidden meaning of educational activities. Therefore, dual learning in volunteers both from teachers and students at school and from the professor online occurred.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Volunteers found and tried to seek their own theme of learning from authentic situations at school. Future research should consider 1) whether BBS communication system has a special effect on participants’ learning or not, and 2) what students and all associated with the school learn from the voluntary activities.